

**POLICY GUIDANCE
FOR HANDLING RADIOACTIVE MEDICAL WASTE
AT OFF-SITE TREATMENT FACILITIES**

March 17, 2006

Off-site medical waste treatment facilities are required to monitor medical waste for radioactivity prior to treatment as part of their operational plans. The Department is issuing this revised guidance as to the practices that shall be followed for work and public health protection at off-site medical waste treatment facilities. This new guidance supercedes that issued by the Department on April 12, 2004. The following constitutes the revised policy guidance.

1. Set the radioactive detection equipment to alarm at a level of three times (3X) background.
2. On the days when medical waste is going to be treated, test the radiation equipment with a known radiation source and take action as necessary to ensure that the alarm is operating when a radiation level of three times background is reached. If a movable radiation detector is used to scan the medical waste containers for radiation, the scanning should be done within six inches from the sides of the container.
3. An area away from workers shall be maintained for the isolation of medical waste that has caused the radiation detection equipment to alarm.
4. Any container of medical waste that causes the radiation detection equipment to alarm must be given special handling considerations. If the medical waste reads **greater than** three times the background level, **but less than** 1,000 micro R per hour or equivalent, the treatment facility shall set the waste aside in the isolation area for 48 hours then re-scan it for radiation activity. If the re-scan indicates that the radioactivity has decayed to a level of three times background or less, the medical waste can be treated. If the readings continue to be above three times background after 48 hours, the Radiologic Health Branch **and** the Medical Waste Management Program of the California Department of Health Services shall be notified and further directions shall be provided, including the possibility of holding the waste for further decay.
5. Any containers of medical waste that cause the radiation detection equipment to alarm with a reading equal to or greater than 1,000 micro R per hour or equivalent, shall immediately be set aside in the isolation area. The generator, Radiologic Health Branch, and the Medical Waste Management Program of the California Department of Health Services shall be notified immediately. Further instructions, including having the generator make arrangements to have the radioactive material returned to their site, will be provided.

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This revised policy guidance is being issued in an effort to ensure that both the Radiologic Health Branch and the Medical Waste Management Program are properly notified for radiation alarms incidents at off-site treatment facilities. The Radiologic Health Branch has assisted in revising this policy guidance and concurs with it. The phone numbers for notifying the Radiologic Health Branch and the Medical Waste Management Program are as follows:

Radiologic Health Branch

Contact Mr. Victor Anderson

(916) 440-7931 Sacramento Office

Medical Waste Management Program

Contact Mr. Ronald Pilorin

(916) 449-5689 Sacramento Office

rpilorin@dhs.ca.gov

Or Mr. Steve Kubo

(916) 449-5684 Sacramento Office

skubo@dhs.ca.gov

Should you have any questions regarding this revised policy guidance, please contact me at (916) 449-5689 or via email at rpilorin@dhs.ca.gov.

Ronald Pilorin, Chief

Medical Waste Management Program